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TWO SERMONS

ON THE

NATURE AND DESIGN

OF THE

GOSPEL OF CHRIST;

AND THE

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT BEING PROPERLY

ACQUAINTED WITH IT;

WITH

THE REASON WHY NOTWITHSTANDING THOSE

CONSEQUENCES SO MANY REMAIN

IGNORANT OF IT.

PREACHED AT THE NEW CHAPEL,

In LOWGATE, HULL, Ddc. 30, 1787,

BY JOSEPH BENSON, *K.*

AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF MANY

OF THE HEARERS.

PRINTED BY G. PRINCE, HULL.

TWO SERMONS

OF THE

REV. J. H. B. B. B.

AT THE

CHURCH OF ST. MARY

ON THE

SUNDAY

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OF



S E R M O N I.

2 COR. 3. and 3, 4.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ (who is the image of God) should shine unto them.

1. **A** Moment's reflection upon the preceding verses, with which this passage of scripture is closely connected, will cast much light upon it and assist us to understand its purport. The apostle, in the foregoing chapter, having drawn a comparison between the gospel and the law, the Christian and Mosaic œconomy, and shewn the superiority of the former to the latter, proceeds in the beginning of this chapter to speak of the conduct of himself and his fellow apostles, who were entrusted with the dispensation of this gospel.

2. *Seeing then (says he) we have received this ministry, a ministry so superior to that wherewith Moses was entrusted, more excellent in its nature and more beneficial in its effects, transforming all who receive it into the image of GOD; as we have obtained mercy to be accounted faithful, as GOD has in mercy accepted us as his servants ~~in~~ in the gospel and supported us in our work; we faint not, are not discouraged, do not desist from the glorious enterprize: But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, whatever a person has need to hide or be ashamed of; not walking in craftiness, not making use of guile, fraud or low cunning, nor handling the word*

of God deceitfully, not corrupting it with impure mixtures of our own (as vintners do their wines) not adding to it, diminishing from it, nor striving to accommodate it to the taste of our hearers : but by manifestation of the truth, by speaking the whole truth clearly and plainly, commending ourselves to every man's conscience, appealing to the consciences of sinners for the truth of what we say, or rather addressing ourselves to their consciences, aiming principally to convince and awaken these ; and all this in the sight of God, knowing he is a witness to our behaviour in his work and will shortly call us to give an account, and therefore desiring to approve ourselves to him.

3. *But if notwithstanding the excellency of the doctrine we teach and the plain, clear and powerful manner in which we deliver ourselves our gospel also (for so it should be translated) as well as the law, be hid, (Gr. veiled or concealed as the face of Moses by the veil, to which he alludes) it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.* The Jews in general were ignorant of the law and their ignorance was attended with the most fatal consequences ; yet still they might have been saved by becoming acquainted with the gospel ; but if they were strangers to the gospel also, there was no remedy for them, but they were lost without hope of recovery. The same is affirmed concerning all mankind in general, as well as the Jews in particular. If any child of man to whom the gospel is plainly and powerfully preached (for what have we to do to judge those that are without ?) still remain ignorant of its nature and unexperienced in its effects, the apostle pronounces
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in the most express terms that he *is lost*, lost now and in the way to be lost for ever.

4. Surely then it highly concerns *us* to whom this gospel is preached, thoroughly to understand it and experience its efficacy, and to be well assured that we do so: Surely if we are wise we shall not rest upon an uncertainty here, shall not satisfy ourselves with any thing short of a clear assurance that we are savingly acquainted with the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—Now with a view to assist you in this most important matter, I beg your candid and serious attention while I enquire into

I. The nature and design of the gospel.

II. The consequences of being ignorant of it.

III. The reason why, notwithstanding these consequences, so many remain unacquainted with it.

And first, I am to enquire into the nature and design of the gospel of Christ.

1. It is well known that the Greek word which we translate gospel, means "*good news*" or "*glad tidings*." Such the gospel undoubtedly is to every child of man; *glad tidings of great joy unto all people*. Such all account it to be who are rightly informed concerning it, who know its worth and their want of it. And if any son or daughter of Adam do not account the gospel glad tidings, the reason is, they are ignorant of it. For it is tidings of eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, health to the sick; tidings of light to them that sit in darkness, of strength to such as are weak and helpless, of liberty to those bound in misery and iron, and of pardon and life to persons condemned to die. In other words, it is tidings of forgiveness of sins, of holiness, and of

heaven to such as are notoriously guilty, utterly depraved and altogether hell-deserving ; tidings of the highest honour and most consummate happiness to persons sunk into the greatest depth of infamy and wretchedness. In the gospel we learn that *God hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of David his servant—salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us, that we might serve him without fear in righteousness and holiness before him all the days of our life.* In short by the gospel glory is brought to God in the highest, peace is proclaimed upon earth, and the good-will of heaven is manifested to men for it discovers to us a *Saviour who is Christ the Lord*, divinely appointed and sufficiently qualified to rescue fallen man from sin and misery and reinstate him in the favour and image of God.

2. But I must be a little more particular. The whole gospel proceeds on this supposition that mankind are in a fallen state, that they have lost the favour and image of God and are by nature ignorant, sinful, guilty and helpless : *that there is none that understandeth, that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, that the whole world are guilty before God, and that we are all without strength.* On this foundation the gospel is built : Take away this and it has nothing to support it. Deny the fall of man, his original depravity, the one source of all his actual transgressions, and you deny the whole gospel of Christ, all that deserves the name of gospel or glad tidings. For sure to deny that we are sick is to deny we have any need of a physician ; and if we are not guilty and condemned, he does but insult us who offers us a pardon. Let then the secret infidels of our day speak out ; let them tell us in plain terms that they disbelieve the gospel of Christ ; let them
openly

openly avow their sentiments and reject Christianity altogether. This would be acting a far more honourable part (and they too are men of honour!) than under colour of friendship and with professions of regard, slyly to stab it in the dark and cowardly to endeavour that in secret which they dare not attempt openly.

3. Taking it for granted then, that mankind are lost, the gospel proposes their restoration. It is exactly suited to our case: it is just such a dispensation as we want: it is a remedy every way adequate to our disease. It offers us all that we lost in Adam, and much more than we ever had. It shews us how we may escape sin, and death, and hell, and how we may recover holiness and heaven, the favour and image of GOD here, and the enjoyment of his glory for ever hereafter.

4. But all this will appear more manifest if we consider, a little, the short but full account the apostle has given us of the gospel in the preceding chapter where he compares it with the law. ver. 9 he calls the Law, *the ministration of condemnation*, and the gospel the *ministration of righteousness*. By the *law* there, he principally means the moral law which alone was *written and engraven on stones*, ver. 7) and this he call the ministration of condemnation because it condemns mankind for their violation of it. Had we observed and kept it in all points, at all times and in all respects, perfectly, universally and constantly, instead of *condemning*, it would have acquitted and rewarded us: *For the law saith He that doeth these things shall live by them*. But because we have all violated it in one or more points (*and he that offends though only in one point is guilty of all*) therefore it condemns us all. And hence the apostle declares, *as many as are of the works of the law* (expect salvation by the merit of
(works

works) are under the curse, for it is written *curst is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

5. Such is the condition of all men by nature. *All having sinned and come short of the glory of God,* all are guilty before God, children of wrath, and under sentence of condemnation to the second death, the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. And the law, considered in itself, in its precepts and penalties, knows no mercy but denounces judgement without mercy. It provides no way of escape. But the gospel does : it is a *ministration of righteousness* : it shews us how we may be pardoned and accepted consistently with the justice and truth of God ; how we may be delivered from the curse of the law and yet the authority of it be preserved inviolate. Therein the day star from on high hath visited us to give light to us who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet in the paths of peace. For therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, GOD's method of justifying sinners by faith in the righteousness of Christ. Therein we learn that God made Christ sin (or a sin-offering) for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him : that God hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness (both justice and mercy) for the remission of sins that are past : that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Hence it is that, notwithstanding our guilt and impotence, we may be justified freely by his grace through the redemption that there is in Jesus ; yea God can be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, he can pardon and accept the sinner, without any impeachment of his divine perfections

fections or any derogation from the authority of his holy law.

6. On this ground it is, that the gospel offers us a free, full, and universal pardon for all our past offences. It assures us *that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them*, and that he hath committed to his apostles the word of reconciliation. They therefore, according to the commission Christ had given them, beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God, not only preached repentance but also remission of sins in his name among all nations: In his name they offered, and that to all without exception,

- “ Pardon for infinite offence! and pardon
- “ By means that speak its value infinite!
- “ A pardon bought with blood! with blood divine!
- “ With blood divine of him we made our foe!
- “ Persisted to provoke! tho’ woo’d and aw’d,
- “ Blest and chasteis’d yet flagrant rebels still!”

And in order to the enjoyment of this pardon, required nothing of mankind but repentance towards God, and faith, living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, both which they represented as the gifts of God. For, with the prophets *they bore witness that if we draw nigh to God he will draw nigh to us, and that whosoever believeth in Christ doth receive the forgiveness of sins; yea that by him all who believe are justified from all things*. Thus we see it is clearly revealed and expressly declared in the gospel, that because of what Christ hath done and suffered, the moment we truly believe on him (*viz.* with a penitent and loving heart) *God is merciful to our unrighteousness and our sins and iniquities he remembers no more*. He treats us as though we had never offended, accepts us through the beloved into the number of his

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children

children, and we *receive the promise of the spirit through faith, even the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba Father.*

7. This leads me to speak of another principal blessing of the gospel concerning which also we are informed in the former chapter. ver. 7, the apostle calls the law *the ministration of death*, ver. 8, the gospel *the ministration of the spirit*. He calls the law the ministration of death, and not only because it condemned wilful transgressors to temporal death, and condemns us all to the second death; but also because in consequence of our violation of it we are deprived of union with God, in which our spiritual life as much consists, as our natural life in the union of soul and body. Our sins have separated between us and our God; we are alienated from the life of God, and of consequence are spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins.

8. To illustrate this a little. No sooner has the soul left the body than natural life is at an end. The body has no longer any sensibility of pleasure or pain. It has no longer any sensation: it has eyes, but sees not, ears, but hears not. It has no longer any power; it cannot move, or act, or make resistance; but may be dragged hither and thither at will. It is helpless, tends to putrefaction, and is only fit to be removed out of the sight of the living, to whom it is now become loathsome and abominable.—In like manner, no sooner has God left the soul than spiritual life is at an end. The soul has no longer any sensibility of sin, its evil nature and dreadful tendency; any conscious grief when overtaken by it, or joy when preserved from it. It has no longer (if I may so speak) any spiritual sensation: it *sees not by faith him that is invisible, hears not the voice of Christ, nor feels the powers of the world to come.* In
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other words, it has no saving knowledge in divine things, GOD and the things of GOD are concealed from it: It has no longer any power; it cannot move one step heavenward, perform any thing properly good, or resist and conquer temptation; but the devil, the world and the flesh drag it hither and thither, at pleasure and uncontrouled. It is helpless, corrupted by sin, filthy and polluted and only fit to be removed out of the sight (as it were) of an holy GOD, to whom it is now become abominable and buried in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

9. In this condition the law leaves mankind. Considered in itself, it points us to no remedy, but rather pronounces us incurable and our case desperate. Not so the gospel: it is a *ministration of the spirit*. It informs us of and offers to us the holy spirit of GOD, whose office it is to restore our souls to spiritual life and heal all the diseases which by sin we have contracted. Therein we are told that when Christ *ascended up on high and led captivity captive, he received gifts for men, even the rebellious, that the Lord GOD might dwell among them: that in him all fulness dwells, and that out of his fulness we may receive grace for grace*. Therein we are informed of the *saving grace of God appearing to all men, and of the true light enlightening every man that cometh into the world*. And we are assured if we do not quench this light and reject this grace, it shall be imparted more and more to guide, renew and comfort us. For in the gospel Christ offers to *baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire, to live in us that we may live also, to quicken us and raise us up and make us sit together with himself in heavenly places*. He promises, if we will come to him and *drink, out of our belly* (figuratively speaking) *shall flow rivers of living water*, such abundance of

spiritual life shall we possess that it shall overflow (as it were) for the quickening and refreshment of others ; yea he assures us (if we ask) *he will give us living water, and that water shall be in us a well of water springing up to life eternal.* Now all this he speaks of the spirit which they who believe on him do receive, that spirit which is offered in the gospel and which accompanying its truths when delivered, renders them *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

10. By this spirit we are again united to God and put in possession of spiritual life. Our eyes are opened and we see the dreadful situation we are in by nature and practice : We discover the ruin that hangs over our guilty heads and threatens to bury us in eternal destruction. Our deaf ears are unstopped and we hear the voice of him *that raiseth the dead and calleth things that are not as though they were,* calleth us to 'come forth out of the grave of sin that we may live a new life, *a life hid with Christ in God.* I mean, our understanding is enlightened with the light of life, and we are made acquainted with things spiritual and divine, which while destitute of the spirit we could not discern. Our conscience also is roused from its lethargy and we are convinced of sin and of righteousness. We are now no longer insensible of grief and pain on account of the sins we have committed and the punishment we have deserved, or of joy and delight, on account of what Christ hath done and suffered for us, and the prospect of eternal glory he hath opened to our view. But we feel the most tender and lively affections, excited by the things of GOD which before we could contemplate with total unconcern.

11. The Holy Spirit has stripped sin of its disguise, and beholding the monster in all its deformity

ment of gospel blessings, the entire possession of their heavenly inheritance: They then *receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls.*

16. *For life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.* Not contented within the narrow bounds of time, it launches out into an eternal state and there expatiates at large. It not only acquaints us with what shall hereafter be transacted within the sphere of creation and limits of time, but it unfolds the mysteries of eternity, and conducts our contemplations through the immensity of the Godhead. "It burns the present world, triumphs over death by a general resurrection, and opens all into an eternal state." The restoration of *those* bodies to immortal life, which were reduced to corruption and dust in the grave; the conflagration and dissolution of this beautiful system of things; the decisive trial of men and angels at *his* bar, who once expired upon an ignominious cross between two thieves; and the issue of all in the everlasting destruction of the finally impenitent and the eternal glory of the righteous; these are the important events revealed in the gospel, but which I must now forbear to consider.

17. And now, my brethren, say if this gospel, so surprizing and wonderful in its discoveries; so deep and unfearchable in its mysteries; so alarming and dreadful in its threatnings; so comforting and delightful in its promises; and so enriching and ennobling in its privileges and blessings; say if this gospel does not well deserve the serious attention, diligent study and hearty reception of all!

"What heart of stone but glows at thoughts like these?"

"Such contemplations mount us; and should mount

"The soul still higher; and never glance on man,
"Unraptured

“ Unraptured, uninflamed ! —

“ Oh ! the burst gates, crush’d sling, demolish’d throne,

“ Last gasp of vanquish’d death ! shout earth and heav’n,

“ This sum of good to man !

Surely this gospel, so true and faithful, so just and reasonable, so suitable and advantageous, so excellent in itself and so beneficial to us, is well worthy of all acceptance ! High and low, young and old, rich and poor have equal need of it, may be equally blest by it, and are equally concerned to bid it a most hearty welcome ! All orders and degrees of men should embrace this gospel with the utmost fervour of desire and warmth of affection, the most absolute confidence and extatic joy. But alas ! how far is this from being the case ! How far are the generality, notwithstanding their need of this gospel and the blessed effects it would produce if properly received, from heartily and cheerfully embracing it ! Thousands there have been in every age, and thousands there are in this age, yea in this nation, who (whatever they may pretend to the contrary) manifest by their tempers and conduct that they are yet unacquainted with that gospel which they profess.

Now that we may be able to judge whether their character and conduct deserves our imitation it is worth our while to consider, as was proposed,

II. The *Consequences* of rejecting or not being savingly acquainted with the gospel.

I. Upon this head little need be said, the case, is so exceeding plain. It is sufficiently evident from what has been already advanced that as the gospel finds all mankind in a lost condition, destitute of the favour and image of God, and liable to his wrath and eternal damnation ; so it is intended to recover them from their fall, and to restore

restore them to that holiness and happiness which they have lost. And it is a dispensation manifestly well calculated, nay altogether sufficient to answer this end. It is a remedy not only every way suited to our disease, but of sufficient virtue to expel it and put us in possession of our former health and happiness. And all who embrace this gospel, according to the design of its author, prove its efficacy, and find to their present and eternal comfort, that it does in fact accomplish all that it has promised to the ruined race of Adam.

2. But at the same time, be it observed, that as it is an *all-sufficient* remedy, so it is the *only* sufficient one. There is no other means of health and happiness; no other way of salvation, but that which this gospel reveals. *There is no other name, given under heaven among men, whereby we can be saved* but that of Christ, whom this gospel makes known. There is no other *sacrifice for sin*, which can take it away and procure for us a pardon, but that which the gospel points out. There is no other *spirit* to discover to us our want of that sacrifice and to enable us to depend upon it with penitent and obedient hearts, but that which the gospel offers. Hence it certainly follows (as it is in our text) *if our gospel be hid, it is hid to those that are lost*. All that are unacquainted with it, that do not experience its divine efficacy, remain in that lost, ruined, wretched condition in which all are by nature and that without help and without hope. No other remedy will ever be offered, no other way of salvation ever revealed, no other means of happiness ever prescribed; but they must for ever suffer all the miserable consequences of their fall in Adam: They must remain diseased and dead in sin here, till they are adjudged to the second death hereafter: they must continue polluted, accursed, miserable, till they are
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bid to *depart accursed into everlasting fire*, which will not purify them from, but encrease their pollutions, where *he that is unholy* will be more and more *unholy still* and of consequence will be the more tormented.

3. Such, in the nature of things must be *the end of those who obey not the gospel of Christ*. They sin against the remedy and must therefore perish without remedy : they will not come unto Christ that they may have life ; they can receive it from no other, and therefore they abide in death till they are sealed up in death eternal. But is this all ? Have they no other misery to dread but *this* which is merely a consequence of their fallen state ? This punishment, thus consequential will, no doubt, be great beyond conception, and might well deter any considerate and serious mind from rejecting the gospel of Christ. But yet this is not all the impenitent have to fear. There is further reserved for them a superadded and encreased misery, as a just recompense of their ingratitude and rebellion, for rejecting the salvation offered in the gospel. For surely, if after all that has been *designed* by infinite love, *contrived* by infinite wisdom, and *executed* by infinite power ; if after all the unparalleled sufferings and astonishing transactions of the Son of God, with the amazing process of divine grace in our behalf, from first to last ; if after all the super-intending care, the awful judgments, and distinguishing blessings of God's providence ; the plain directions, terrible threatenings and comfortable promises of God's word ; the solemn warnings, affectionate addresses and earnest invitations of God's ministers ; and above all, the condescending visitations, moving discoveries and powerful pleadings of God's spirit ;—if after all this (I say) we still ungratefully reject the gospel of Christ,
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and steel our hearts against its efficacy, nothing remaineth for us, but a *fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour us as adversaries*, a judgment far more severe and an indignation far hotter than would have befallen us, if so much had not been done for our recovery.

4. Concerning this matter the scripture is plain and exprefs. *This*, it tells us, *is the condemnation*, not that all died in Adam and are by nature in a lost estate (tho' even on this account are we condemned and the condemnation is sufficiently dreadful) *but that light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil*. That provision is made for the instruction, holiness and happiness of mankind, and they chuse rather to remain in their original ignorance, sin and misery, therefore they shall be condemned to a greater punishment and a more aggravated ruin. This is further manifest from the conduct of God towards the Israelites, who abused the light and privileges of a more dark and imperfect dispensation; a dispensation established with far less apparatus of grace and mercy, and less illustrious displays of love and power; which did not cost the Godhead so dear (if I may so speak) and upon the success of which his heart was not so much set. Now was their contempt and abuse of this inferior display of divine goodness suffered to pass unpunished? Far, very far from it. *Every transgression and act of disobedience* (says the apostle) *received a just recompence of reward; and they that despised the law of Moses died without mercy under two or three witnesses*. May we not then argue with the apostle, *of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who tramples under foot the Son of God, counts the blood*

of the covenant an unholy thing and does despite to the spirit of grace ! If they escaped not who refused him who spake on earth (viz Moses) much less shall we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven ! And if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression thereof severely punished, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first begun to be spoken (not by angels but) by the Lord himself, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his will.

5. From these declarations of holy scripture, they who neglect or reject the salvation of the gospel may judge what they have to expect, even judgment in extreme without any mixture of mercy, a torment as great as infinite wisdom can contrive and Almighty Power execute, and lasting as the days of eternity ! Unhappy creatures ! *Their judgment of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not ! For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (though no Saviour died for them, no salvation was offered to them or rejected by them) and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment ; much less will he spare them who have multiplied their offences as the sand on the sea shore, and have rejected a pardon, though purchased for them, by the most exquisite sufferings, and ignominious, painful death of God's own Son !*

6. And does it not then concern us, my brethren, most seriously to enquire, whether we reject this gospel, and neglect the great salvation offered in it ? Can we omit so to do and not be

wanting in *prudence* as well as *grace*? As devoid of *wisdom* as of *piety*? Surely, if we are careless about a matter of such infinite importance, we shew that we as truly disregard our *own welfare* as the *honour of God*, and are as certainly enemies to *ourselves*, as to our great and gracious *Creator*. Enquire then, I beseech you, I do not say, into your *knowledge*, but into your *experience* in this matter, and ask your hearts whether you have seen your need of, and cordially embraced those blessings which have this day been set before you? Has the gospel been a means, through the blood of Christ and the spirit of God, of ministering to you *righteousness* and *life*? Has it justified your persons and renewed your nature? Have you found peace with God through it, and power over sin? Adoption into his family, and a restoration to his likeness? If you have hitherto, not only stopped short of these privileges, but have even rested contented without them, be assured whatever knowledge you have gotten of the gospel in *theory*, you are yet unacquainted with it in *experience*. It has not, by any means, answered its intended end upon you, but is still really *hid to you*, and you remain in a lost estate and are in the high road to be lost forever!

7. May the Lord incline you to lay this to heart ere it be too late! May you feel your want of those blessings, which are freely offered you in the gospel of Christ and gratefully receive them! The gospel has come to you in *word*, may you never rest till it also come to you in *power and with the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance*! In order hereto, may you *seek the Lord, while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near*! May the wicked, among you, *forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts*, and may you all

turn unto the Lord that he may have mercy upon you, and unto our God that he may abundantly pardon! May you turn to him in true repentance and unfeigned, living faith, a faith of the operation of his spirit! May you ask that this repentance and faith may be given you, and seek, in the use of appointed means, that you may find! Thus may the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every penitent, believing soul, be the powerful means of your salvation! Being justified from all things through faith in the blood of Christ and sanctified through the operation of his spirit, may your conversation be such as becometh the gospel on earth, till you receive your heavenly inheritance, that eternal life and happy immortality brought to light by the gospel.

SERMON

END OF THE FIRST SERMON.

S E R M O N II.

2 C O R. iv. 3, 4 ver.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ—should shine unto them.

1. **I**N a former discourse on this important passage of holy writ, I endeavoured to shew the *nature and design* of the gospel of Christ and the *dreadful consequences* which attend our *rejecting it*. And, undoubtedly, it is of so excellent a nature, and proposes a design so benevolent and glorious, that all to whom it is offered ought in reason and duty, to embrace it heartily and without delay; even supposing they might neglect so to do without suffering any inconvenience. But when it is further considered to what extreme and endless misery they certainly expose themselves who reject this gospel, one would suppose no child of man who reflects at all upon the subject, could hesitate one moment about it; one would imagine that motives of *self-interest*, at least, would prevail where *duty and gratitude* had no influence; and that a *fear of punishment* would *compel* those, whom redeeming love did not constrain, nor promises of happiness allure.

2. And, blessed be God, one or other of these considerations do, through the influence of divine grace (absolutely needful in this weak and disordered state of human nature) persuade many to comply with the design of this glorious gospel. But alas! this is by no means the case in general (I

(I speak not of Jews, Turks, and Heathens, but of professing Christians :) The generality even of *these* do most certainly reject the gospel of Christ and neglect the great salvation offered by it. Into the reason of this conduct 'tis worth our while to enquire, especially as it may be a means of preserving us from an imitation, which, I am sure, is no way desirable. This I shall take occasion to do from the words of our text, where the apostle hath given us a key to unlock this mystery (and a mystery, no doubt, it is :) *The god of this world* (says he) *hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.*

3. The inspired penman (it seems) still alludes to the case of Moses, who put a veil over his face, so that the glory of it could not be discerned by the Israelites. Thus, as he has intimated in the preceding chapter, a veil of obscurity was cast over that dispensation, through which the Jews (whose minds also were blinded) could not discover the end and design of it. Hence they were not savingly benefited by it; it did not lead them to Christ, as was intended. Now tho' the gospel be not veiled, but suffered to shine out in full lustre; yet *the god of this world*, industrious to prevent the salvation of mankind, by *blinding the minds of them that believe not*, prevents them from discerning the light of this glorious gospel or from being enlightened by it.

Three particulars offer themselves to our consideration on this subject.

1st. Who is meant by *the god of this world*, and why he is so called?

2dly. Whom we are to understand by *those that believe not*?

3dly. How the god of this world blinds their minds?

1. With

1. With regard to the *first* of these, "who is meant by the god of this world, and why he is so called?" I should have thought it unnecessary to say any thing by way of explication, had I not occasionally met with some who interpret this of *Jehovah*, the *God of love*, the *Saviour of all men*, whose *tender mercies are over all his works*; as if he, concerned to prevent the salvation of his creatures, whom he hath redeemed with his Son's most precious blood, acted the part of the grand adversary of mankind and blinded their minds by sin and unbelief, lest they should be enlightened by that very gospel which he has provided, in his infinite goodness, for their illumination. The bare mention of so wild a notion as this, is with men of understanding and piety, sufficient to confute it. By *the god of this world*, the apostle undoubtedly means *satan*, who is elsewhere called *the prince of this world*, and *the ruler of the darkness of this world*, and *the prince of the power of the air*, *the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience*. This apostate spirit, this enemy of GOD and man (and not the GOD and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ) is doubtless concerned to hinder the success of the gospel, which is designed for the overthrow of his kingdom, and with this view exerts, to the utmost, all his power and policy from day to day, continually *lying in wait to deceive*, like a subtle serpent, and like a *roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour*.

- " He now is plotting how he may seduce
- " Us also from obedience, that with him,
- " Depriv'd of happiness, we may partake
- " His punishment, eternal misery,
- " Which would be all his solace and revenge,
- " As a despite done 'gainst the Most High."

2. Some

2. Some (wise, above what is written) would account for this expression, whereby satan is called *the god of this world*, by supposing that this world was originally under the dominion of the fallen angels before their rebellion, and was the seat of their kingdom; and that upon their fall, as a punishment for their crime, it was reduced into that chaotic state described, Gen. 1. ver. 1. *The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep*. Hence it was, they further suppose, that when the earth was put into its paradisaical state and man placed in it (who they think was created to supply the place of the fallen angels) God did not entirely banish them this world, but still permitted them to wander to and fro in it, and not only to tempt the human race (for their trial) but also to exercise some authority over the elements and other creatures; tho' under certain restrictions beyond which they cannot pass. But it is certain all this is mere conjecture, without any countenance from any part of scripture. And it is plain satan may be called *the god of this world*, with sufficient propriety without supposing any thing of this kind, even on the same principles on which he is termed (as we have seen) *the prince of this world, and the ruler of the darkness of this world, and the prince of the power of the air*; and that is, because of the influence he has over mankind in general, and the use he makes of the dazzling vanities and allurements of this world, to attain and preserve that influence.

4. Accordingly the expression here used is more properly translated *the god of this age*, i. e. of the people of this world, or of mankind while the period of this world lasts. And surely, in order to justify the apostle's manner of speaking, it is not necessary to suppose that the people of this world

world build temples to satan, or pay him a solemn and formal worship (though even that has not been wanting.) But as Jehovah is called the God of his people, because they are his *subjects*, obedient to his will and devoted to his service ; so, for the same reason is satan called the God of this world. Mankind, in general, obey and serve him, and he reigns in and over them with all authority. They willingly *commit sin*, and therefore they are *of the devil* : *His servants they are*, because they obey him, and from him must expect to receive their wages. *They lie in wickedness* (Gr. in the wicked one) and shall have their portion with him.

And this is the case of all who believe not, who have not that faith in this gospel whereof cometh salvation. For the apostle tells us in our text, that *satan hath blinded the minds of them that believe not*, and elsewhere that he *worketh* (Gr. worketh with energy, with mighty power) *in the children of disobedience*, or (as the word may be properly rendered) of *unbelief*. And who these are we were 2dly to consider.

And 1. That all infidels, who do not acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, nor admit the Christian revelation to be of God, are of the number of those *that believe not*, will not be denied by any, who know any thing even of the theory of religion. That the devil (how little soever they may think they have to do with him, though they may utterly deny his very existence, and be confident there is no such being in nature; yet (I say that satan) hath blinded *their* minds, and works in *them* with mighty power, with uncontrouled authority, we are well assured. It is something amazing, and what excites one's compassion rather than provokes one's indignation, to hear *these*
creatures

creatures boast of their superior knowledge, and to see them value themselves upon their *free thinking*, unbiassed (they suppose) by popular prejudices; while they are in reality blinded by the god of this world, *and led captive by the devil at his will*, the very bond-slaves of satan and dupes of a vain and deluded mind. Surely one must pity the infatuation of these

“ Pompous sons of reason idoliz’d
 “ And vilified at once; of reason dead
 “ Then deified, as monarchs were of old;”

Who as a punishment for their pride and self conceit and because *they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved, are given up to strong delusions to believe a lie, that they may all be damned who do not obey the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness*. They pretend indeed a regard for truth, and plead strongly their right to think for themselves (a right which no-body will wish to deny them) but alas! as Dr. Young justly observes,

“ While love of truth thro’ all their camp resounds,
 “ They draw pride’s curtain o’er the noon-tide ray,
 “ Spike up their inch of reason on the point
 “ Of philosophic wit, call’d argument;
 “ And then, exulting in their taper, cry
 “ Behold the sun! and, Indian like, adore.

Light is come into they world, but they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

2. But not only those, who reject the Christian revelation altogether, come under the character of them that *believe not*: those also must be considered as included under the same denomination, who tho’ they admit the gospel to be of divine authority, yet neglect or renounce some of its principal privileges, and perhaps ridicule and reproach those
 who

who profess to receive them, as enthusiasts and fanatics. For instance: If the gospel indeed offer pardon of sin and acceptance with God, through the righteousness of Christ, together with the Holy Ghost to seal those blessings upon our hearts and enable us to walk worthy of them; then all who deny, or neglect the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and *the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins*, do in effect deny and neglect the gospel itself, and are therefore undoubtedly blinded by the god of this world, and to be ranked among those *that believe not*. Yea, and

3dly. We must give the same appellation to all who rest without *saving faith*: *the faith* which is not only an *assent* to, and a *conviction* of the *truths* of the gospel; but also a *dependance on its promises*, and an *heartly acceptance of its privileges*: *the faith* which, besides a persuasion of what the gospel reveals in *general*, implies further, an entire approbation of, and hearty acquiescence in the plan of salvation by Christ in *particular*: *the faith* which is both *the evidence of things not seen* and *the subsistence of things hoped for*; whereby we are both assured of things spiritual and eternal, and anticipate the enjoyment of things heavenly and divine, already possessing an *earnest of our future inheritance in our hearts*. *He that thus believeth with his heart unto righteousness*, certainly *hath eternal life*, hath a title to it and a foretaste of it, for *through Christ all that believe are justified from all things, and receive the promise of the Spirit thro' faith*. But he that doth not thus believe, but rests satisfied without this faith, *hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*, he remains in that wretched state of sin, and guilt, and wrath in which he was by nature, unreformed, unforgiven; having a superadded condemnation for neglecting so great salvation as is offered through the Mediator. The
gospel,

gospel, which is only the *power of God unto salvation to him that believeth*, is hid to him, and he is lost.

I now proceed to shew (as was proposed)

3dly. How *satan blinds the minds of those that believe not*, so as to keep them shut up in unbelief and prevent the *glorious gospel of Christ* from *shining unto them*, that they may be saved.

1. The god of this world knows that the gospel will only be heartily and thankfully received (and to receive it otherwise is not to receive it at all) by those who know its worth and their want of it; and that only those can know this who are deeply concerned for the salvation of their souls. This therefore is his *first* point, to keep mankind unconcerned about their salvation. With this view he labours to conceal from them the vanity of the world with all that it contains, its unsatisfactory nature and short duration. He contrives to engage and entangle them in such a multiplicity of business, to charm and stupify them with such a vicissitude of pleasures, to divert and entertain them with such a variety of amusements, that they have neither leisure, power, nor inclination for any serious reflection, on the importance of things eternal.

2. Impelled by an unseen force (of which they are insensible, nay, which they are taught to deny and ridicule) they fly from the exchange to the tavern, from the tavern to the play, and from the play to intemperance and debauchery: They drive furiously from merchandise to company, from company to excess, from excess to the stupidity of sleep, and in the mean time forget they are only wandering from vanity to vanity, and prove by this restless toil and labour that this world is not their rest. Or, if on some occasion a conviction of this forces itself upon their minds, and

“Kind

————— “ Kind experience cries,
 “ There’s nothing here but what as nothing weighs,”

They summon up all their courage and exclude the thought as an intruding tyrant, come to torment them before the time. They run round and round in the circle of business, pleasure and amusement, only intent on what is beneath their feet, or eager to catch the delusive phantom, which, perpetually dancing before them, craftily entices them forward; and in the mean time, they do not (by faith) observe the melting elements, the quaking earth, the falling stars, the darkened sun, the departing heavens, and the descending triumph of the victorious Son of God, who ere long will command, “ Bring forth these mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them and slay them before me.”

3. Day passes after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, and they draw near the chambers of death, the repositories of all living; where strict justice will examine and almighty wrath punish, with unrelenting fury their wicked impertinence and trifling; yet still they go on in the same silly pursuit, unconcerned and unreformed, as if life would always last and they were not accountable for their conduct, or as if this world were their only portion, and while endeavouring to secure it, they were rationally employed. Time flies, and “ on his broad pinions, swifter than the wind,” bears them rapidly along towards the confines of a boundless eternity, into which he resigns them for their bliss or woe, endless and extreme, according to their present behaviour: But they are thoughtless amidst it all, amused and entertained with the objects they meet with in their speedy course: Or lulled into a fatal slumber by the even and insensible motion, they

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do not awake to sober recollection, till, cast down the steep precipice of death, they are shocked to find themselves falling, beyond recovery, into a boundless eternity.

4. Thus (as our poet beautifully describes it)

————— “ Life speeds away
 “ From point to point tho’ seeming to stand still :
 “ The cunning fugitive is swift by stealth !
 “ Too subtle is the movement to be seen ;
 “ But soon man’s hour is up and we are gone ! ”

Life is all trifled away and the great business of life is left undone : *We stand all the day idle and neglect to work in the vineyard, till the night of death cometh wherein no man can work.* We are hurried out of this world before we well consider why we were sent into it, and surprized into another, before we have made any preparation for a favourable reception or comfortable abode there. We enter upon an eternal state of existence, for the boundless and everlasting demands of which, we have made no provision, have laid up no treasure. We have squandered away our talents in sin and folly, neglected to pay the debt of wisdom, and now are become bankrupts : the justice of God arrests us, and we are delivered into the power of malicious tormentors, to be confined in the dark prison of hell, *till we shall pay the uttermost farthing.*

5. Now satan has an hand in all this. Thro’ his influence it is (inwardly upon the mind or outwardly upon the senses) that the flight of time is not discerned, and,

“ We scarce believe we’re older for our years :
 “ That all mankind mistake their time o’ day ;
 “ Even age itself : Fresh hopes are hourly sown
 “ In furrow’d brows. So gentle life’s descent,
 “ We shut our eyes and think it is a plain.”

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He engages our attention by the objects of sense, draws the veil of unbelief betwixt us and eternity ; and lest that should not suffice, lest the merciful arrows of conviction, taken from the quiver of the gospel and levelled at the heart by the spirit of truth, should penetrate that veil, he further obscures our prospect with the fumes of pleasure, and clouds of prejudice, arising from unruly passions and appetites, immersed in sensual gratifications.

6. But 2dly, if, notwithstanding all his care to keep us quiet and insensible, the gracious beams of divine light find their way to our minds, thro' all intervening obstacles, and disturb our slumbers : if we are roused from our lethargy and awakened to a deep sense of the importance of salvation, fully resolving to mind the one thing needful : then Satan, craftily yielding where he can no longer withstand, persuades us to defer to a more convenient season, what, he grants it is reasonable we should one day attend to. “ By and by (he artfully insinuates) we shall be in a better situation, have fewer hindrances and more helps in religious matters, and shall find it less difficult to ensure an happy eternity. At present we have some business of consequence to transact, some engagements to fulfil, some affairs to settle which do not well consist with religion. Besides it will be better to change our conduct by degrees, and not all at once ; to slide into seriousness imperceptibly ; for by this means we shall avoid the ridicule of our companions and be less liable to the charge of hypocrisy, enthusiasm, or melancholy. And we have time enough upon our hands, are in good health, younger than many of our neighbours who are as careless as we, and are likely to live yet many years. God is merciful and will pardon us, tho'

on a death-bed, and receive us to work in his vineyard even at the eleventh hour."

7. Thus our sly adverſary too often prevails, and what we cannot but purpoſe we poſtpone. We ſtill reſolve to be very religious, but *not yet*. At ſome future period, we cannot poſitively ſay when, we intend to be very good, very exemplary, yea burning and ſhining lights. And it is well if we are not a little vain on this account, proud of our future goodneſs!

- " We pay ourſelves the compliment to think
- " We one day ſhall not drivel, and our pride,
- " On this reverſion, takes up ready praiſe,
- " At leaſt our own; our future ſelves applauds;
- " How excellent that life we ne'er ſhall lead!

In the mean time he craftily keeps out of ſight the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death. We forget that our breath is in our noſtrils, and that we may, like many of our friends and neighbours, be hurried hence at a moment's warning: that we may never live to ſee that future period we build our everlaſting all upon, no, nor one future hour: but ſuppoſe we ſhould, that God may then juſtly deny that grace to aſſiſt us (and without it we can do nothing) which was before offered, and rejected or abuſed. But proceeding on falſe principles, we take for granted what ought firſt to be proved, and rely upon that as certain which is, of all things, the moſt uncertain. *Perhaps* we may live till to-morrow, *perhaps* God may then vouchſafe us his grace and therefore we *will* defer our repentance for the preſent.

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- " On this *perhaps*,
 - " This per-adventure, infamous for lies,
 - " As on a rock of adamant, we build
 - " Our mountain hopes: Spin our eternal ſchemes,
 - " And, big with life's futurities, expire.

8. And

8. And not only the *young* or the *middle-aged*; the *Old* too, come under this condemnation.— Though they have already grieved and quenched the spirit so often, that they have great reason to think he will soon bid them a final farewell, if he have not even *now* actually done it; though they have already arrived at the utmost boundaries of man's life, at the very margin of the grave, and are tottering over it through age and infirmity, in danger of being suddenly tumbled in by the stroke of affliction, and covered up by the command of death: yet even *they* think it is time enough yet, and feebly mutter (being now unable to speak plain) something about *repenting hereafter*. Tho' oppressed with the burthen of years, bowed down with infirmity and weakened with pain, they doatingly suppose they shall, by and by, do the business of eternity, run the Christian race, and *work out their own salvation*:—Though their sight is dimmed by age and beclouded with disease, so that they cannot see what is at hand; though all their faculties are weakened; yet they fondly imagine they discern, in prospect, months and years of leisure, health and ease which they will spend for God and their souls. Thus,

“ The hoary fool, who all his days
 “ Hath laboured with continued sorrow,
 “ Yet still goes on and fondly lays
 “ The desperate bet upon *to-morrow* :
 “ To-morrow comes ; 'tis noon ; —'tis night :
 “ This day like all the former flies ;
 “ Yet on he goes to seek delight
 “ *To-morrow* ; —till *to-night* he dies.”

9. But 3dly, If we are so awakened, by the grace of God, to a sense of the absolute importance of things eternal, that we resolve to devote ourselves to him; and so convinced of the *shortness and uncertainty* of time, that we determine
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to delay no longer;—then satan's next aim must be to prevent our finding the only way of salvation and to put us upon a wrong road. For this purpose he diverts our attention from the *spirituality, obligation and extent* of the law of GOD, the *universal, constant and persevering* obedience it requires, and the dreadful punishment it threatens to all the violators of it; in order that, not comparing our hearts and lives with it, we may remain strangers to our *guilt and weakness*. Thus, he knows, we shall continue ignorant of our *want* of the gospel, and so shall be hindered from embracing its glorious privileges.

10. For not seeing our many, great and aggravated iniquities, we must be insensible of the guilt we have contracted, the punishment we have deserved, and our own utter inability to make any satisfaction for our sins, or to avert the impending ruin. Thus we cannot discern our want of the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of the appointed Mediator in order to our justification before GOD. Hence, it is no wonder, if we imitate the Jews of old, who *had zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; for being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God*. Again, not seeing the depravity of our nature and the necessity of a change (because *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*) or not knowing our own insufficiency for any thing that is good, we must be unacquainted with our need of that spirit of holiness and power, which God hath promised in the gospel. Hence it is no wonder if, *having a form of godliness, we deny the power of it, if having a name to live, we remain dead*: it is no wonder, if we put confidence in the flesh, lean to our own understanding, trust in our own strength, and perish at last without remedy.

11. Thus

11. Thus many who have been open sinners, rest in a mere outward reformation, lopping off some of the branches of sin, while they leave, not only the roots deeply fixed in the ground of their hearts, *as with bands of iron and brass*; but also the unwieldy stock not hewn down; I mean their stubborn *will* still unsubdued by grace, still proud and refractory, and bent upon serving the world and themselves. And thus others, who have not been notorious sinners, content themselves with this consideration, "that they are not so bad as many of their neighbours, and, if we are not saved (say they) what will become of the generality of the world." And thus daubing the corrupted wall of their depraved nature with the untempered mortar of self-righteousness, they vainly suppose it can stand the shock of death and judgment, when it is ready to fall at every thrust of adversity, or breeze of temptation!

12. Many however (blessed be God) do not fall by this snare, but in spite of satan and his devices, are convinced of sin and its dreadful consequences.—It would now be in vain for the god of this world to attempt persuading *these*, that they may safely defer the concerns of their souls to a yet future period. They see and feel to their sorrow, that they have already trifled too long, and greatly endangered, if not altogether precluded their salvation. They tremble to think, how the axe of God's justice was laid to the root of their barren souls, and how narrowly they escaped being cut down, as cumberers of the ground; a punishment they well deserved. They are ashamed and confounded under a sense of their sin and ingratitude, when they consider how long they have robbed *him* of their bodies and souls, their time and talents, from whom they received all, and to
whose

whose service all ought to have been constantly devoted. They are distressed at their folly and madness, when they reflect, how many years they have thoughtlessly wandered to and fro through the earth, *seeking rest but finding none*, vainly expecting that happiness from the world which is to be found in God alone; shunning religion as a wretched and melancholy thing, whereas they now see it is the only source of true and lasting felicity. And shall they still go on adding one degree of sin and ingratitude, folly and madness to another? No, this they dare not do; nor can all satan's power or policy shake their fixed resolution, formed in the strength of Jehovah, no more to tread in their former steps.

13. He does not however yet give them up, does not despair of working their ruin after all. But he takes a new course and alters the plan of his operations. *Before*, he endeavoured to destroy them by *presumption*, and *delays*: *now* his aim is to effect the same purpose by *dejection*, and *despondency*. He suggests therefore that their sins are too many and great to be forgiven, that their souls are too depraved ever to be restored, and too much enslaved to the power of evil habits ever to be delivered. Knowing their regard to the word of God, he labours to countenance his temptations with its authority, that they may have the greater influence. "You have blasphemed (he argues) against the Holy Ghost, and therefore must expect no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. You might indeed once have found mercy, but it is now too late: you have sinned so long, so much, so presumptuously, in despite of so many invitations, warnings, promises, threatnings, which ought to have led you to repentance, that you must now expect judgment

ment without mercy.” “ Because he called and you refused, he stretched out his hands and you did not regard, therefore he also now laughs at your calamity and mocks when your fear is come. When your fear is come as desolation—when distress and anguish is come upon you, you may indeed call, but he will not answer, you may seek him early, but you shall not find him. For that you hated knowledge and did not chuse the fear of the Lord : you would none of his counsel, and despised all his reproof ; therefore you shall eat the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices.” “ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And are you holy ? Alas ! you are altogether polluted, and who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? As soon might the Ethiop change his skin or the leopard his spots, as *you*, accustomed to do evil, learn to do well : For the spirit has done striving with you, and you are now left to the hardness of your heart, and given up to a reprobate mind.”

14. By these and such like suggestions satan sometimes prevails, and the poor soul, giving up all for lost, sinks down into dejection and despair, not daring to rely on the faithful promises of God through Christ. Fearing, however, lest if they still continue sensible of the deep importance of salvation, and desirous to obtain it, though at present without hope, they may, some way or other, *hereafter* meet with that encouragement, which *now* they cannot find ; to prevent this and insure their damnation, the enemy labours to drown them in sensuality and vice, or to bury them in business and care ; and sometimes (though less frequently, because he is not permitted) to drive them into distraction, madness and self-murder.

15. He suggests therefore, “ Since no attention, desire or diligence of yours can alter the
decree

decree which is already gone out against you, why should you torment yourself before the time? why should you make yourself miserable by thinking one moment about death or eternity? Nay, rather banish all thoughts about these things, which only serve to distress you and enjoy life while it lasts. You can but go to hell after all, and go to hell you must as it is, if indeed there is an hell. But (he adds) who knows whether or no there is any such place; perhaps your body and soul die together and shall never more exist: And why should you venture a certainty for an uncertainty? Let fools and fanatics do this: But be you wise for yourself. At all hazards enjoy the present, let what will come of the future. But in fact (proceeds he) the future is out of the question, it is nothing to *you*: perhaps it is all mere imagination, but if not, it is certain *you* have no interest there. The present world is *your* all: therefore, enjoy and make the most of it: Eat, drink, and be merry, this even, Solomon tells you, *is your portion than which there is nothing better for a man, in the days of his life which God giveth him under the sun. Go thy way then (says he) eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the woman whom thou lovest all the days of thy vanity, for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.*"

15. Thus this old serpent, long experienced in the arts of seduction, craftily interweaves his nets with threads of scripture, forced from their natural sense and misrepresented, that he may the more easily ensnare and detain in his power unwary souls. Not being acquainted with his devices, they are too often caught in them. So silent and natural are his suggestions that they
mistake

mistake them for the mere operations of their own minds, and never suspect he has any hand in them, and so plausible and shrewd are his reasonings, that they yield to them with little or no reluctance. Indeed if they *considered* and *prayed* to the Father of lights for the illumination of his spirit, they would soon discover the fallacy of his arguments, but not considering, or trusting to their own understanding, the grand deceiver is too cunning for them, and accomplishes their ruin ere they are aware.

17. This however (blessed be God) is only the case with very few that are convinced of sin. The generality (we have reason to believe) of penitent and broken hearted sinners are enabled to withstand in the evil day, to resist the devil and he flees from them. Laying hold on the shield of faith, (offered them by God whose gift it is) they repel his fiery darts and are preserved unhurt. By a faith of the operation of God, they see and are persuaded that the *blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin*: that, thro' it, *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and even to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. They see that *in Christ all fulness dwells, that his grace is sufficient for them* and through this *strengthening them, they can do all things*, can overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, *cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God*. They believe *he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, and that whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out*. They therefore apply to him and trust their guilty, depraved and wretched souls to his care, and it is done unto them according to their faith. They find *redemption in his blood, the forgiveness of sins, they are accepted in the beloved: they receive the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry "Abba Father."* and the fruits
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of this spirit are *love, joy, and peace*, holiness and happiness, a preparation for and an earnest of eternal life. Thus notwithstanding all satan's efforts to the contrary, the gospel *shines unto them* and they are enlightened by it, enlightened with the *light of life, the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus, and walking in the light, as he is in the light*, they expect, in the way of universal holiness, an admission into those heavenly mansions, where the *Lord will be their everlasting light, and their God their glory*.

1. And now, my brethren, having pointed out unto you some of those many devices, whereby satan beguiles unwary souls, let me beseech you to consider whether you are ensnared by him? Do not rashly conclude you are not till you have thoroughly examined yourselves as to all the particulars mentioned above. And remember, if that gospel which you have heard has not proved the *power of God unto your salvation* from the guilt and dominion of sin; you are to this day, in one respect or other, ensnared by him. May you lay this consideration to heart with the seriousness its importance demands! Persuaded if the gospel continue to be *hid to you*, you will be eternally lost, may you never rest till it so *shine unto you* that you are *enlightened by it with the light of life!* Being awakened to a deep sense of your lost estate, and engaged *now*, without delay, to *acquaint yourself with God and be at peace*, may it please the Father to bring you into the right way and reveal *his son in you*; that he being made of God unto you *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*, you may *escape every snare of the devil*, stand against all his wiles, overcome to the end, and at last be crowned as conquerors!

